



Pro Kinship for Kids

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Teaching Children to Resolve Conflict

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Many parents feel discouraged when their children resist requests made of them. How do we teach children to cooperate and resolve conflict?

They need to learn problem-solving skills and develop avenues for generating socially acceptable alternatives for getting what they want. Following are some general steps in teaching problem-solving skills to children.

- 1. Understand the problem and help children see the goal.** When children are upset, fighting, angry, or hurt find out the details. Spend some time focusing on feelings. Children see things primarily from their own perspectives. To negotiate fair solutions, children need to know how others feel. Generating ideas for solutions is much easier for children when they have a clear goal. Children get the idea that the needs of both are important.
- 2. Stress the importance of honesty.** Help children realize that being honest is a strength of character and leads to friendships

- and benefits in the long-term.
- 3. Teach reflective listening skills.** Help children express themselves from their perspective. By sharing feelings and understanding others' feelings, better solutions can be agreed upon. After the children have generated all the ideas they can, evaluate the consequences.
- 4. Encourage apologies for hurts.** By claiming responsibility for actions, children better understand their role in the conflict and how others feel.
- 5. Support an agreement to change actions in the future.** When the children have completed thinking of ideas and evaluating them, make a plan. Resist the temptation to judge the ideas. Adults will not always be around to tell a child that his or her idea is not good and to suggest another. In the long run, adults are more helpful by encouraging children to evaluate ideas themselves and understand why they are unacceptable.

- 6. Model caring towards all persons involved.** In daily life accentuate the importance of helping and caring for others. After a solution has been agreed upon help the child think of other ways he or she can be a helper to that person or others.

The process of teaching problem-solving often seems tedious, and parents may be tempted to just tell a child what to do. But that does not allow children to gain the experiences of thinking of what to do for themselves.



With conflict resolution, you can help your children turn those anger, sad faces into happy ones.



Cooperative Problem Solving for Teens

We just were talking about teaching conflict resolution, but this issue can need some special care when communicating and working with teens. Cooperative problem solving is a way to deal with disagreements between parents and teen.

1. **Present the problem.**
2. **Look for agreements that lead to solutions.**
3. **Gather information on the perceptions of everyone concerned.** It is often best to wait until a later time when you are both calm.
4. **Stick to the issue and listen.** When kids start sharing their feelings, parents need to listen carefully for the feelings

- underneath the words.
5. **Keep asking: “Is there anything else?”** It is important to keep asking this question until it all comes out. Otherwise you’ll probably be dealing with surface issues rather than deeper issues.
 6. **Reflect your understanding.** See if you can summarize and say back to your teen in a calm, neutral voice what he/she just said to you.
 7. **Share your perceptions.** Getting their permission first invites listening and cooperation. After they have agreed to listen, share your perceptions of the problem. Remain calm and do not put them down. Just share your feelings.
 8. **Ask your teen to reflect their understanding.** It is helpful for a

parent to respond that they weren’t criticizing them, but just sharing their feelings. Also state that you realize that it may be different for them and that’s okay.

9. **Brainstorm for solutions.** Agree on a solution, set a date for evaluation, and follow through.

A parent’s role is to teach children. By being respectful, they learn respect. By following through on our commitments and being responsible, they learn responsibility. Parents also must realize that though this decision making is an important skill to teach and to learn, teens are still more likely to make snap decisions and act on impulse.



Teens and Employment

More and more teenagers hold jobs before and after school, on weekends, and during school vacations today. Having a job has been associated with both positive and negative consequences for teenagers. Working may increase responsibility, self-esteem, and independence, but it can also lead to more problems at school, home, and their life.

Benefits of Work

The benefits of work come when teens work limited amounts of time during the school year. Teens that do work have a better chance of earning higher wages after they graduate from high school due to their work experiences. Teens can learn valuable skills that relate to their future job aspirations at work and this will help them with further schooling decisions and job advancement. They also establish contacts with adult employers who can give positive recommendations in the future for full-time jobs. Work can also have the positive effect on young people of teaching punctuality and time management as well as working effectively with many other people. But, when teenagers work more than 20 hours a week, these useful lessons may be overshadowed by negative effects.

The Downside of Work

Studies have found that teenagers who work more than 20 hours a week are more likely to experience detrimental effects in their school, family, and personal lives. The adverse consequences of long work hours for teens include fatigue, sleep deprivation, and less exercise. They also spend less time with their families and on homework resulting in poorer school performance.

Teens having more money can also cause concerns. Teens tend to spend their earnings on trendy items that don’t contribute greatly to their health or well-being. In fact, job earnings are sometimes spent on alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs that would not have been possible without the work and the money it provided them.

Time spent by teens in paying jobs means time not spend in other activities that benefit them in becoming a well rounded person such as volunteering, homework, or family events. Make sure as a parent you weigh these trade-offs carefully to the benefits as you work with your teen to determine if work is the best decision for them currently.

Parents Make a Difference!

As a parent, it is your job to work with your teen to decide how many hours he or she can work. Items to consider in this decision are the child’s age, maturity level, the nature of the job they will be doing, and how the teen is doing in school. Consider carefully if a job will benefit a teen who is struggling in school, especially if the work is boring and doesn’t relate to the child’s interests and future plans. Remember your child already has a full-time job - to attend school and get a good education without letting part-time work or other things interfere.

If they do get a job establish standards that your teen should meet in order to keep working from the start of the work experience. One standard might be that school grades must not drop, if the teen is to continue working. You will also want to monitor the number of hours your teen works. If their shift ends at 7 p.m., find out where they will be after 7 p.m., whom they will be with, and what they will be doing. Set the time they must be home after their shift is over. You need to set the plan ahead of time with your teen and know what is going on in your teens life especially with a job.